

## BANKRUPTCY COURT ANNOUNCES SCHEDULE FOR 2011 BENCH-BAR MEETINGS

The U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of Vermont regularly schedules "Bench-Bar Brown Bag Lunch Meeting" dates to discuss issues about the Court, the practice and other topics of current interest in the world of bankruptcy. There are several topics of special interest to practitioners scheduled this year. These meetings will provide an excellent forum for the bar to give the Court feedback on matters affecting local bankruptcy practice.

The first meeting of 2011 will be held in Rutland on February 1, and will focus on the issues this Court will be considering in deciding whether or not to make digital audio recordings of hearings available on case dockets through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) system. For some time, the Court has been digitally recording all hearings. Copies of the recordings are available from the Court for a \$26 fee. The Court now has in place technology which would enable it to upload the recordings to case dockets. The recordings then would be accessible to anyone with a PACER account for a cost of \$2.40 per audio file. (Costs are set by the Judicial Conference, as directed by Congress, not by local courts.) The options available to the Court are to put recordings of every hearing on the docket, to put recordings on the docket unless the Court grants a request not to do so, or to put recordings on the docket only upon motion of a party. The Court is interested in receiving feedback from the bar as well as hearing input as to other possibilities.

The second Bench Bar meeting will be held on April 21 in Burlington and will focus on the procedure for continuing initial chapter 13 meetings of creditors and confirmation hearings and whether to modify the deadline for filing objections to plans. It will also include a general discussion of other chapter 13 scheduling issues, including, for example, the bar's assessment of the effectiveness of conducting hearings through Vermont Interactive Television (VIT) for matters other than confirmation hearings in chapter 13.

The third Bench Bar meeting in 2011 will occur on June 21 in Rutland and will focus on the impact of Standing Order 10-1 regarding the Vermont Judiciary Foreclosure Mediation Program on the administration of bankruptcy cases, and on debtor relief under the automatic stay and discharge provisions of the Bankruptcy Code. After nearly a year of experience operating under the standing order, the Court looks forward to feedback, as well as a discussion of the possibility of adopting a loss mitigation program in this Court.

There is no agenda yet set for the meeting scheduled for October 4 in Burlington. The Court invites members of the bar to suggest topics of interest.

The last Bench-Bar Brown Bag Lunch Meeting of 2011 will take place at the annual December CLE at a place and time to be determined. The topic will be feedback to the Court regarding the effectiveness of procedures established by the 2010 Standing Orders mandating that chapter 13 debtors make plan payments through wage withholding or automatic debits from bank accounts (ACH), and requiring chapter 13 debtors who are in default on their mortgage payments on the date they filed their bankruptcy case to make their post-petition mortgage payments through the chapter 13 plan (called "conduit mortgage payments").

All Bench-Bar Brown Bag Lunch Meetings will be scheduled to last one hour, be held in the courtroom at the indicated location, and begin at 12:00 pm. Attendance in person is encouraged, however, call-in instructions will be sent out by the Bankruptcy Section Chair for those wishing to participate by telephone. If you are not already on the Bankruptcy Section email distribution list and receiving notice of the Bench Bar meetings, please contact Michelle Kainen at [MKainen@kainenlaw.com](mailto:MKainen@kainenlaw.com). To suggest a topic for the October 4 meeting in Burlington, or for an additional meeting in 2011, contact Michelle Kainen, or Kathy Ford at [kathleen\\_ford.vtb.uscourts.gov](mailto:kathleen_ford.vtb.uscourts.gov) or (802) 776-2003.